RNA *For a Better Life in the Heights*

July 2002

RIVERVIEW *Neighborhood Association*

469 Palisade Avenue, Jersey City, NJ 07307(201) 386-9481

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION or ELECTED OFFICIAL

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS PRESENT NEW PROPOSAL TO PLANNING BOARD

On **Tuesday, July 9th**, the **Jehovah's Witness** (JW) group will present another version of their proposal for a meeting center at the corner of South Street and New York Avenue to the **Jersey City Planning Board**. This time they are asking for five variances from the City's zoning requirements. The large number of variances is once again proof of the community's concern that the proposed facility is too large for the building site. In spite of this, the community is pleased that at the very least, this time the parking requirements have been met with this latest proposal.

However, the plans show cars extending past the ground floor building line which is unnecessary. In order to accomplish a quality streetscape these cars should be pushed back inside the ground floor building line, screened and landscaped. This becomes even more critical because their first variance request is to reduce a 20 foot front yard setback to only 1 foot.

The other variances requests are: 1) A Rear Yard Setback of 9 feet from a required 10 feet, due to a slight taper in the lot shape at one end of the building. Cars will be parked in the rear yard setback up to the adjoining property/building line; 2) 88% Lot Coverage of their buildings and parking areas instead of the maximum allowance of 80% and the remaining 20% of landscaping to be reduced to only 12%.

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COMING EVENTS

TUESDAY, JULY 9th

1) **RNA MEETING**: 7:15 PM

Location: Harbor View Health Care Center

2) **PLANNING BOARD MEETING**; 5:30 PM

Location: City Hall, 280 Grove Street

Agenda:

a) Jehovah's Witness Proposal

b) Carport Amendment to Zoning Ordinance

101 MARSHALL STREET

From our vantage point in the Heights, the "Gateway" project at 101 Marshall Street in Hoboken is starting to climb. But wait! A group of Hoboken residents, along with concerned Heights citizens, have created an organization whose sole focus now is to fight this twin, 17-storied giant looming in all our backyards.

The citizens' group, known as the **Hudson County Alliance, Inc.**, has incorporated and filed a suit to legally challenge the serpentine process that resulted in the quiet approval of an over-sized building that will obstruct the Palisade Cliffs and set a dangerous precedent for future projects along the Light Rail in western Hoboken. The group is also pursuing an injunction to stop construction until it can be shown that Jersey City residents and Hudson County were properly noticed of this development's zoning variance hearings. Also in question is the **North Hudson Sewage Authority**'s approval of the sewage hookup to a project that includes 326 residential units, 431 parking spaces, 2 restaurants, a gym and retail space in a documented flood zone.

The outlook is promising. Ideally, the City of Jersey City should lead the charge and we immediately need to appeal to our city representatives to do so. However, success is not dependent on government participation as much as the support of the affected residents in both the Heights and Hoboken. Heights residents are urgently needed to join in this effort and can start by contacting **Monya McCarty** at *monya7@hotmail.com* or **(201) 963-0122**.

A Wilding in the Heights

On Monday, July 1st, I witnessed a frightening incident while walking my dog Louie in Riverview-Fisk Park around 8:30 PM. It was a hot and muggy summer night and the Park was full with people: families with their children, teenagers and young adults. The basketball court had at least four games going, the children's playground was crowded with small kids and there were two or three groups of people playing ball on several of the Park's lawns.

All of a sudden, a group of about ten to fifteen teenagers started to shout and crowd around several girls

that were provoking a fight in the center of the Park. Within moments, people starting running from the basketball court and the pavilion toward this spectacle. In less than five minutes, there was a mob of forty to fifty people.

The police - two uniformed officers on bicycles - arrived within minutes of the commotion and broke up the crowd. They also called for back-up from roving patrol cars.

The teenagers scattered across Palisade Avenue, some going west toward Griffith Street, others along Palisade Avenue toward Bowers Street and the rest stayed in the Park. The Griffith St. group turned up New York Avenue and moved north toward Bowers where they eventually rejoined the other part of this crowd. A police car arrived on the corner and disbursed the crowd into the neighborhood. As far as I could tell, there were no arrests.

I had heard my neighbors complain about these wilding incidents but this was the first one that I had actually witnessed. There is a growing group of teenagers - anywhere from 13 to 18 years of age - that are now roaming through our neighborhood. It appears that these individuals are defiantly abusing all social, civil and even criminal rules. Left unchecked they can create a lawlessness that can eventually disrupt the very fabric of our community. Residents - tenant and property owners - are not going to want to live in a neighborhood that is unable to maintain the minimum amount of order and safety.

The police appear not to be able to handle this crisis. Their method is simply to be disperse the crowd. What they should be doing is taking the chronic offenders - male and female into custody. If the individuals are under age, their parents should be called and made to pick them up. If they are over 18 years of age, they should be charged with disorderly conduct and have bail imposed.

This is just the beginning of what appears to be a long, hot, muggy summer. We must stop this outrageous behavior before we become captive to these hooligans. City Hall must intercede now and lay down the law immediately.

Vito Brunetti

REQUEST FOR DESIGN PROPOSALS: JERSEY CITY WTC MEMORIAL

The **City of Jersey City** seeks design proposals for a permanent World Trade Center Memorial. The planned site of the Jersey City World Trade Center Memorial is Exchange Place, located on the Jersey City waterfront directly across the Hudson River from the World Trade Center.

The design may use or incorporate steel and/or other materials from the World Trade Center site. Photo documentation of the usable materials can be viewed online at *www.proartsjerseycity.org*. There are no design limitations on the use of the World Trade Center materials, and there are no residency requirements for design applicants.

Designs must be submitted on a single piece of paper no larger than 20" X 24". No models or 3-dimensional design proposals will be accepted at this stage of the design process. Submitted designs will be available for public viewing at a September 11 design exhibition. Applicants must also include with their design proposal name, address, phone/email and a brief written description/notes explaining their design.

For more information call either **201-547-5572** or **201-432-3272**, or check the Jersey City WTC Memorial message board at *Newportcity.com*. Postmark design proposals no later than September 1, 2002 and mail to: Mayor Glenn D. Cunningham, City Hall, (WTC Design), 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, 07302.

[*The City will also consider neighborhood memorials or plaques. Riverview-Fisk Park has been suggested as a memorial site because of its unique location where people watched, gathered and mourned the tragedy.*]

MEETING MINUTES: **Tuesday, June, 2002**

The June meeting had a two fold purpose: the first, to update the members as to local concerns in our neighborhood and second, to celebrate the 50th birthday of RNA chair Clif Steinbring. The meeting officially opened at 7:40 PM after Clif was presented with some fun age-related gifts.

The first community update had to do with the repair of several lawns on the Palisade Avenue side of Riverview-Fisk Park. As a result of a recent meeting with **Public Works Director Ron Buonocore** in the Park, the City has committed to installing plants and fencing in the center of these lawns to prevent organized ball playing (ie., volleyball and soccer) that caused the deterioration in the first place. This proposal would leave the lawn located on Ogden and Griffith Street available for ballplaying.

There was also an update on Holland Street since the last month's clean-up and planting. About 90 % of the plants are doing well, a few have died and three had been confiscated.

NTF Police Officer Ed Rutkowski announced the assignment of a Police patrol in Riverview-Fisk Park. The officer will be responsible for patrolling Ogden Avenue as well. Several residents complained about the lack of police response to reports of suspicious behavior on the Mountain Road that runs behind Ogden Avenue between Griffith and Franklin Streets. It appears that certain vehicles are parking illegally on the dirt road and blocking residents from their own properties. The concern is that an emergency vehicle would be unable to get access to these properties because of these illegal parked vehicles.

There was an important announcement concerning an attempt by small project developers to lobby for important amendments to the City's zoning laws. If passed by the City Council, the changes would allow front yard carports, smaller rear yard setbacks and more curbcuts along the street. RNA is opposed to these changes that would be in direct conflict with the new zoning ordinance and the City's Master Plan.

There was a discussion about the latest plans for the **Jehovah's Witness** project for South Street and new York Avenue. For more information, see the article on front page of this newsletter.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT

RNA would like to thank our neighbors, members and friends for helping make our 18th Annual Park Fair and Flea Market a great success: **Phil Baldwin, Doris Brown, Steve Carr, Orlando Cuevas, Margi Daly, Len Davis, Beth and Dan D'Errico, Joan Earls, Claire Gaito, Tim Gilliard, Roger Heitman, Mats Jerndal, Kevin Mahony, Monya McCarty, Patrick Moore, Eric Mortimer, Ann O'Marra, Michele O'Marra, Luis Ramos, Jack and Valerie Rea, Pat Reidy, Michael Repp, Joe Sadowsky, Clif Steinbring, Valerie Woodson, and Pamela Windo.**

Thanks to our local merchants for their generous contributions: **Goerhrig's Bakery** (475 Central Ave), **Palisade Dry Cleaners** (429 Palisade Ave), **Palisade Lumber** (432 Palisade Ave), **Partytime Productions** (201-610-0920), **Royal House Floor Supply** (431 Palisade Ave), **Signs & Graphics** (330 Palisade Ave), **Silly Willy, the Magician** (201-386-0433), **Silon Hardware** (402 Central Ave), and **Stop 'N Shop Supermarket**. Special thanks to **Saint Nicholas Church** and **103.5 WKTU** radio station for their help.

In addition, RNA would like to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the following City officials and agencies: **Mayor Glen Cunningham, Councilmen Bill Gaughan and Steve Lipski, the Department of Cultural Affairs,** the **Fire Department,** the **Incinerator Authority,** the **North District Police Jersey,** and the **Division of Parks & Forestry**.

RNA would also like to thank all the wonderful volunteers who helped out during the day, especially those who escorted the residents of the **Harbor View Health Care Facility**. Finally, we apologize to anyone who was not acknowledged, but your efforts on behalf of our community are well appreciated.

Finally there was a update on the organizing efforts of several Heights residents to fight the two seventeen story towers **Gateway** project in Hoboken.

The effort of several members to organize a Farmer's Market in Riverview-Fisk Park were rescheduled for late fall or probably to next year. The highly successful tile project in the Park will continue with the installation of more tiles along the northeast retaining wall along the cliff.

The meeting ended at 8:50 PM.

Maria Tuzzo, Secretary

COMMUNITYUPDATES

720 MONROE: On June 20, 2002, the **Hoboken Planning Board** approved the mix use development project, known as 720 Monroe Street. The project will consist of four residential towers containing 435 units and 19 artists lofts, 1135 parking spaces, 125,950 sq ft. of retail space, 37500 sq. ft of new office space and 120,500 sq ft of existing office space. There will also be approximately 78,000 sq. of public space within the project site. The project is located near the New Jersey Transit Light Rail station at 9th Street in Hoboken's Northwest redevelopment zone.

Heights residents and many Hoboken citizens publicly spoke out against the project because of the unnecessary heights of the four towers: NE tower - 13 stories, NW tower - 13 stories, SW tower - 12 stories and SE tower - 10 stories. These towers will be taller than the Palisade cliffs and block views not only of the New York City skyline and Hudson River but of the cliffs themselves. There is a concern that this project will create a bad precedent for other projects along Hoboken's western border.

POLICE: During the month of June, the police have maintained a high profile in Riverview-Fisk Park with their Mobile Precinct vehicle and their bicycle patrols. They have extended their patrols down Ogden Avenue and to the corner of Griffith Street and Palisade Avenue.

Despite the efforts of the police, our neighborhood appears to be overrun by groups of unruly people. On almost a daily basis, these groups - made up of both male and female members - roam through the Park. The slightest provocation appears to turn them into a shouting and aggressive mob vandalizing parked vehicles in the Park. If and when the police disburse them, the crowd scatters down the side streets of Griffith and Bowers, causing further concern of the local residents.

RNA E-MAIL LIST

RNA is announcing the formation of an e-mail address list for its members, friends and neighbors. The list will be used to transmit emergency notices regarding community issues and also announcements for upcoming events.

This list will not be used for solicitation, given to other organizations or sold to commercial enterprises.

Please send your personal e-mail address to the following location: *RNA@gitch.net.*

Letters to the Editor:

HELP STOP 101 MARSHALL PROJECT

[*The following letter was written by local Heights resident* ***Rick Pastore*** *to Jersey City Mayor Glenn Cunningham.*]

Dear Mayor Cunningham:

I am a Jersey City resident and homeowner in the Heights section on Ogden Avenue. I recently learned that on September 12, 2001, the City of Hoboken granted final permits for a developer to construct an 18-story mixed use building practically in our backyard on Marshall Street even though the project was originally approved as only a 9-story project. As I am sure that you have heard many times before, a project of this size will dramatically alter the aesthetics of the neighborhood and significantly burden an already overburdened infrastructure system.

As a result of the project's expansion in size, a number of local Hoboken and Jersey City residents have had discussions with the current Hoboken city administration to protest the project's mysterious growth to 18-stories and to discern how this expansion was approved. The reply from the Hoboken officials has generally been that they do not want the development either, but that the permits were granted under the previous administration. However, some Hoboken officials, when queried by local residents on the current status of the project and the permitting process that approved the 18-story project, have given vague, evasive, and even false answers. In addition, some Hoboken officials have made comments implying that the permitting process was not entirely followed to the letter of the law, but when pressed for details, nobody wants to talk.

I find it a perversion of the democratic process that while most of us were literally dusting ourselves off and getting our bearings the day after September 11, the City of Hoboken and the developer of this project were jamming their permits through the process as fast as possible. It is also curious that construction of the project's foundation began before the developer even had an approved sewer permit (it seems a risky proposition to spend money on pile-driving and concrete if you don't know that you have a sewer line). I, along with my fellow residents, believe that the developer is fast-tracking this project due to some flaw in the permits. However, we do not have the legal expertise to solve the case or the financial ability to hire counsel to ferret it out. And for obvious liability reasons, we can't expect the Hoboken administration to police themselves.

If this project is completed, I, along with many other Heights residents, will be seeking a lower tax assessment next year due to the project's assured impact on our quality of life. Therefore, given the financial implications of this project on our City's tax roll, I respectfully request that you refer my letter to the City of Jersey City Legal Department so that they may investigate what the City of Hoboken was doing leading up to the developer's coup on September 12. If, in fact, the City of Hoboken did not legitimately grant the final permits, perhaps it is not too late to get an injunction on this

project and ratchet it down to a size that makes sense.

The irony of the situation is that during last year's Millennium Towers debate, the City of Hoboken was right there protesting Jersey City's actions. Certainly, if the City of Hoboken can protest the development approval process of Jersey City on behalf of its own residents, it is not too much for Jersey City residents to expect its local government to similarly look out for its taxpayers.

Abolish the Development Corporation in Liberty State Park

[The following letter, written by Eleanor Traina, was reprinted from the June 23, 2002 issue of the Jersey City Reporter.]

I know everyone has read many articles about getting rid of the snakes who comprise the development corporation. The private developers keep trying to take over our Liberty State Park to make money from it. I utilize Liberty State Park almost every day, whether it be walking my dogs, bike riding or rollerblading. Everytime I go there I never tire of the serenity and peacefulness of the park and the open space. Every person who goes to the park respects it. I have seen large groups of people having birthday parties, barbecues, etc., and when they leave the park, you would not even know they were there. They pick up every scrap of paper from their spot. Where else could you see such commitment to nature? And the people respect the park because it?s free, open and green, and they want to keep it that way.

There was another scene that moved me early Sunday morning when I was bike riding. An Hispanic male probably in his late 40's, parked his car in the playground parking lot, took a small chair out, placed it under a very small tree for shade, took out his Sunday paper and just sat there peaceful and quiet and read his paper. I wish I had my camera because it was a breathtaking picture. If the private developers take over our park would this be possible? Absolutely not. Firstly these people who are not wealthy would have to pay to have their parties and family gatherings at the park and this peaceful man would have to read his Sunday paper over the noise of an amphitheater, waterpark, golf course and who knows what else the private developers would think of to make money.

We have to be strong and forceful and convince Governor McGreevey to abolish the development corporation once and for all by sending him an email, postcard, phone call or whatever else is convenient for all the citizens of Jersey City. If the private developers take our park away, what else do we have in Jersey City that is so beautiful and unique. Protect our Liberty State Park!

[Write Governor James E. McGreevey at P.O. Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625, or go to his website's e-mail form at *www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html.*

Additional info can be obtained at **Friends of Liberty State Park** website:*http://www.folsp.org.*]

VISIT *savethepalisades.org*

Jehovah's Witness

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3) They are proposing a 56% Building Coverage instead of the maximum allowance of 50% of the lot to be covered by buildings; and 4) Stacked Parking would allow for additional cars to be parked bumper-to-bumper in the street level parking area, with the main building being above them.

The Planning Board hearing is **Tuesday, July 9, 5:30 p.m.**, in the **City Hall Council Chamber, 280 Grove Street**. For further information call **Clif** at **(201) 386-9481.**

BULLETIN BOARD

SHAKESPEARE IN OUR PARK

The **Hudson Shakespeare Company** will present an original production of the Bard's KING LEAR in Riverview-Fisk Park on **Wednesday, July 24th** at **7:00 PM.** The play directed by Michael Collins will take place around the center gardens. Bring a comfortable chair, mat or blanket and some refreshments. Enjoy the unique night under the stars!

Conrad Award

Rubeena Faroqui, valedictorian of this year's Dickinson graduating class, is the winner of the 2002 Theodore Conrad Award for Highest Achievement in History. Rubeena has been an honor roll student for 4 years and served on the Student Council. She will attend Rutgers University in the fall.

Contribute to Your Community Newsletter

What do you think about this newsletter? Send articles, opinions, announcements, poems and recipes to: RNA, 469 Palisade Avenue or to: *RNA@gitch.net.* Next deadline is: **July 26th.**

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Support RNA by paying your annual membership dues of **$7.00 per person** at the July 9th meeting or sending a check, payable to RNA, to 232 Ogden Avenue.

Membership entitles you to the monthly newsletter and voting privileges, if you live within the RNA boundaries. RNA's boundaries are **Ogden** and **Palisade Avenues** from **Cuneo Place** to **Congress Street.**

POLICE BEAT: 201-547-5477

Report any problems, safety concerns or knowledge of a criminal or suspicious activity to the police radio room at the above number. Leave your name, telephone number, street address, the nature of the problem, an accurate description of the individual(s) and/or vehicle involved and date and time of the message. All call will be strictly confidential. To report drug dealing, contact the **Narcotics Unit** at **(201) 547-5391.** Call **911** for all health, safety or criminal emergencies.

SHAKESPEARE IN RIVERVIEW-FISK PARK
KING LEAR
WEDNESDAY, JULY 24TH AT 7: 00 PM
HUDSON SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

RIVERVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
469 PALISADE AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07307

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FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

"Support Your Community" Night

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, July 9th**. RNA asks all its members, friends and neighbors to attend one of two important meetings on that night.

Either come to the monthly **RNA meeting** at **7:15 PM**. Or go to the **City's Planning Board meeting** at **City Hall** starting at **5:30 PM**, where we need the community to express it's opinion about the Jehovah's Witness latest proposal for South Street and New York Avenue and also it's opposition to a dangerous proposal to amend the new zoning ordinance that would allow carports in both new and existing properties in our neighborhoods.

Jersey City Garden

(circa 1940s)

This building was a very popular event hall used for boxing, wrestling, dancing and Jersey City's all-important political functions. It was located on the corner of Ogden Avenue and Franklin Street in Jersey City Heights.

At different points in its history, the building was also known as Grand View Hall (c. 1915-1920s) and The Grotto (c. 1930s and 1940s). It was destroyed by fire in 1964. The site is currently occupied by the Harbor View Health Care Facility.

The photograph is reprinted from "Jersey City, 1940-1960, The Dan McNulty Collection," published by Arcadia Publishing, 1997, Kenneth French, Author.